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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 000082

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SUBJECT: MAYOR MEETS AMBASSADOR, CONFIRMS EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE

CLASSIFIED BY: Ken Gross, Ambassador, EXEC, DoS.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: In a platitude-ridden meeting, Dushanbe Mayor Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev said upcoming elections would be free and fair, that contributions to the Roghun Dam were voluntary, and that the losses suffered by the United States in Afghanistan were felt by Tajiks as their own. Ubaidulloev asked for help in getting Tajik students admitted to Harvard University, but effectively declined to help find a new location for an American Corner in Dushanbe. He asserted the existence of life on other planets, caveating this by noting that we should focus on solving our problems on Earth. End Summary.

AFGHANISTAN

[¶2.](#) (SBU) On January 13 Ambassador called on Dushanbe Mayor and Chairman of the upper house of Parliament Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev at his parliamentary office. The Mayor began the meeting with a lengthy discourse on Afghanistan, thanking the United States for its contributions and sacrifices there, and saying that U.S. activities there were very important "as we enter the third millennium and the 21st century." Ubaidulloev thought the main task there was to build a sense of national identity among ethnically disparate groups, and said the United States was an example for this. He noted that "war is very dangerous", and said "we know there is life on other planets, but we must make peace here first."

ELECTION RESULTS ARE LIKE EARTHQUAKE IN HAITI - UNPREDICTABLE

[¶3.](#) (SBU) Ambassador asked for the Mayor's prediction on the results in the upcoming election. Ubaidulloev said predicting the results was as hard as "predicting the earthquake in Haiti." He assured Ambassador that the elections would be free, transparent, and fair, noting that President Rahmon had insisted on this at the last PDPT congress. He commented that political parties in Tajikistan were not proactive enough in contesting elections, but "thanks God we have independent media" which gave all parties and candidates public exposure.

THE OTHER CAMPAIGN - ROGHUN

[¶4.](#) (SBU) Ubaidulloev said despite the low salaries of most Tajiks, they supported Roghun's construction, as they had suffered from the lack of electricity. He claimed the health,

education, and cultural sectors did not contribute to Roghun, and all other contributions were voluntary. Ubaidulloev said wealthy businessmen were eager to buy shares of Roghun as it was a profitable investment.

CYBERCAFE, AMERICAN CORNER, AND EDUCATION

15. (SBU) Ambassador told the Mayor that the Dushanbe cybercafe, built by the city of Boulder, Colorado, as part of its sister-city relationship, still did not have water or power except for a few solar panels. These power some of the Internet computers, but were inadequate for the cafe's full operation. He asked the Mayor to help get water and power connected to the cafe. Ubaidulloev averred that he was hearing of this problem for the first time and said it would be no problem to connect power and water. (Note: the Cybercafe supervisor has raised these problems with the Mayor's office several times.)

16. (SBU) Ambassador then asked for Ubaidulloev's help to find a location for a second American Corner in Dushanbe. The Mayor quickly suggested that the cybercafe would be the ideal location for the American Corner since it was in a densely populated area of the city.

17. (SBU) Ubaidulloev said the parliament had declared 2010 the Year of Education. He raised his interest in seeing Tajik students attend U.S. universities, repeatedly mentioning Harvard

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University as an example. The Tajik government and the administration of Dushanbe were ready to fund studies at Harvard, but needed the embassy's guidance on what training courses and level of English were required. Ambassador offered to put Ubaidulloev's staff in contact with Embassy Public Affairs staff to explore this issue.

18. (C) Comment: The Mayor has for long been a difficult, unpredictable, and sometimes hostile interlocutor. In deference to the Ambassador's language preference, Ubaidulloev spoke for the most part in Tajik, though he readily admitted that he would make many mistakes. His monologues confirmed this, and understanding him in Tajik was made doubly difficult by some of his nonsensical statements. Embassy staff have heard that the Mayor opposes unfettered public Internet access and has told city businesses and government agencies not to rent space for an American Corner if it involved Internet facilities. His quick suggestion that we colocate the American Corner in the cybercafe was unhelpful and in accord with our longstanding impressions of him. However, what we found most striking in this meeting was his strict adherence to obvious, and tired, lies about free elections, voluntary contributions to Roghun, and free media. A right painful 90 minutes. End Comment.
GROSS